

JACK DANBY'S
EAST YORKSHIRE
MISCELLANY



*A selection of poems and stories
taken from broadcasts on BBC
Radio Humberside between 1971
and 1981*

THE YORKSHIRE DIALECT SOCIETY

JACK DANBY'S
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MISCELLANY**

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It is just twenty five years since Jack Danby's little book was published with material from Jack's radio scripts accompanied by some of those scraper illustrations with which he was so happily identified.

Most notable in this and other books by Jack is that, as well as illustrating the pages with his drawings, he prepared the manuscript in his own hand, a very legible example of classic penmanship.

What perhaps impresses most about this treasury is the dialect text he projected over the airwaves of BBC Radio Humberside. The series of talks was called 'Plaan Speeakin', and topics included dialect, folklore, local literature, and more.

His frequent companion on the walks that he describes was his wife Anita, herself an enthusiast for East Yorkshire and, most particularly, the Derwent Valley.

The real joy of this reprinted book, and the broadcasts it recalls, is the language of East Yorkshire that Jack spoke so delightfully. His rich, deep tones repeating the verses of some of the poets that he knew so well are preserved for us by the BBC, and in the companion CD to this book. The written words in his fine scrip also recall the sound of his performances.

We were fortunate to have Jack in person among us for many years, sharing with us his delight in the Miscellany of East Yorkshire, and we continue to be enriched by the opportunity the Yorkshire Dialect Society is taking here to reproduce the material from his radio broadcasts between 1971 and 1981.

Stanley Ellis April 2006

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FOREWORD

In 1971 David Neave of the WEA, for whom I had taken classes in the 1960s, asked me to prepare radio scripts on East Yorkshire dialect for BBC Radio Humberside. The result was the series *Plaan Speekin*, produced by Arnold Miller and first broadcast in early 1972. There have been several subsequent series on dialect, folk-lore, local literature and poetry, as well as one describing the course of the River Derwent, all produced by Arnold Miller up to 1978 and then by Jenny Danks. This booklet, in my own manuscript and with my own scraperboard illustrations, contains a selection of short pieces from most of the series.

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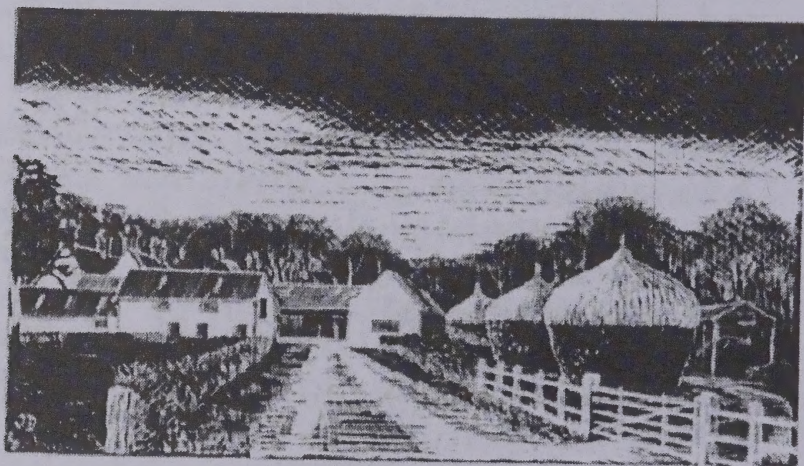
The first programme in the 1972 series **PLAAN SPEEAKIN** described conditions for the farm servants on the East Yorkshire Wolds in the early years of this century.

An old waggoner, remembering his work with horses as a 12-year-old 'a lang tahme afoor t'fost war' described the difficulty of leading two big horses, drilling corn and keeping a straight line across a huge Wolds field: "Yah 'and reeachin up ti t'blinnders teeah sahde, t'other 'and up ti t'blinnders t'other sahde, dancin at ivvery ton on t'eadland ti keeap thi feeat frey under t'osses' ooves, t'foorman on t'drill cossin at tha. Efther awf an oor thoos felt as if tho'd been crucified. Monny a tahme Ah's ligged misen doon beyont a pike in t'staggarth rooarin for ooam."

A pike is a round stack of corn, usually carefully thatched, in the stack yard. Garth is a Scandinavian word still used for an enclosure and lig is Saxon, used for lie in East Yorkshire for 1300 years. If you were 'rooarin' you were weeping. There were probably many occasions when a homesick boy or girl sought a quiet corner to 'lig misen doon an rooar'.

The working conditions were certainly hard and off-duty hours had precious little comfort or pleasure. Wages were very low; before 1914 a waggoner's lad received less than £10 at the end of his year's contract. The important factor was food. The hired lads and lasses judged the standard of their 'pleeace' or 'spot' by the quality and quantity of their daily fare. It was a 'middlin meeat-oose' or 'nobbut varry middlin', with a wide range of status in between. The diet was not very imaginative but usually sufficient. There was cold lean beef and cold fat bacon for breakfast, with dry bread. Butter was served only rarely, perhaps for Sunday tea. The foreman presided over the table, carving and rationing out the slices of meat. If grace had been said after the meal it might have been: "We thank thee Lord for what we've gotten. If there'd been mair cutten there'd a been mair etten." There was usually a good hot midday dinner of, for example, 'meeat an tatie' pie, with a suet or Yorkshire pudding served first, with gravy. "Them as eats meeast puddin gets meeast meeat" was the saying which encouraged the lads to take the edge off their considerable appetites at least expense.

Tea was much the same as breakfast with also 'a good cut of pie'. The drink usually was 'blue-blob', separated milk from the farm dairy. The pies might be of brambles or other fruit in season. When I asked Charlie Broadley of Etton, who was first hired as wag-lad in 1911, about the content of the pies he said "We ed apples thruff t'winter aw hahl rhubub was fit an then rhubub til apples was riddy." And in his first 'spot' Charlie found fault with Missis's pastry: "It wor that ard thoo cood a ta'en yan of er greeat roond pies an booled it awf a mahl doon t'farm rooad wioot iver lossin a plum-steau."



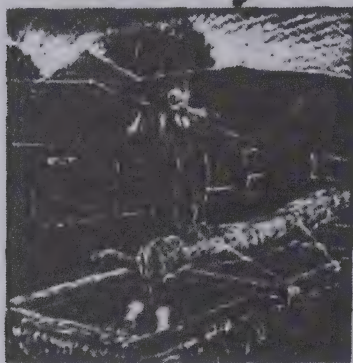
Two more pieces from PLAAAN SPEEAKIN

"Neeabody as neea right ti trow nowt inti neeabody garden". This was a comment on the fact that someone had thrown rubbish over the garden fence ; 'neeabody had neea right ti deea sikelike'. We use the double negative often enough, as Chaucer did. It lends point and emphasis to the statement. To say "It's neea mair yowse than nowt ti neeabody" is much more emphatic than "It's useless". We are contrary in some of our forms of speech ; we pronounce th where a plain t sound would do, as in 'dowther' for daughter, 'bootther' for butter, 'thries' for tries, but when a th sound is standard we change it to a t. We do not throw things into gardens, we 'trow' them, or possibly we 'swaal' them. We make things easier for ourselves by simplifying the possessive case, especially in Holderness. We just miss the apostrophe out, in the same way as we miss out or shorten the definite article. We like the strong past tenses : 'tret' for treated, 'snew' for snowed, 'sew' for sown, 'clum' for climbed, and the strong participles such as 'gotten' for got, 'brussen' for burst, 'hodden', 'cутten', 'letten', 'putten'. The school child admitted "Ah've gone an putten putten wheer Ah owt ti a putten put." Even after the turn of this century there were

people in rural East Yorkshire who regarded 'beeak-larnin' as irrelevant to their lives and to the needs of their children. School was tolerated but not universally appreciated. Even after the days of 'band-makking' and 'bod-tentin' there were many interruptions to schoolwork to meet the demands for casual labour by the children on the land. The fixing of school holiday dates was influenced by the seasons of corn- and potato harvest until the 1940s. I myself can remember a school manager whose sole interest in education was the number of potential 'tatie-scratters' held conveniently captive. He said he didn't hold with too much 'beeak-larning', hadn't he managed all right without it himself? - a question I found difficult to answer. Even if a boy or girl had leanings towards 'beeak-larning' there was little opportunity for a village child to get a secondary or further education, right up to our own times. Occasionally some child overcame all the difficulties but generally the academic did not spring from our village elementary schools. We tend to regard the scholar with suspicion. When I asked a friend of mine how he had enjoyed a lecture we had heard, his reply was "Why, he's a clever chap, is yon, but thoo needs a lang stee ti listen tiv im!" ❖ ❖

Much of the vocabulary associated with country-side crafts, common until the early years of this century, has disappeared from conversation. Who talks nowadays about a 'ligh and strickle'? Who would understand what was meant by an 'off-ender' or a 'reaster' if the talk was of working horses? How long is it since you heard anyone refer to a gate-post as a 'yat-stowp'? In an account book dated 1904 from the village blacksmith's shop at Settrington these words occur all close together: 'stubbin-dig'—that is a mattock for tearing out the roots of thorn bushes; 'cobble-tree'—a wooden swinging bar so shaped and fitted that it formed a link between the harness on two working horses and whatever they were drawing; 'strake'—a section of an iron tyre on a wheel or fitting; 'yam-hooks'—the hooks, one on each side of a draught horse's collar, to which traces are fastened; 'scruffler'—a tool for cultivating between rows; 'gaveloc'—a crowbar, used for setting stakes in the ground, with a point for making a hole and a flat part for hammering; 'skelbease'—the partition between stalls in a stable or cow-house. Although those words are still familiar to many country people, most of us would not immediately understand them and the next generation will probably be

bewildered by them. The village blacksmith had work to do for the housewife as well as for the farmer; he could repair a 'rannle-baulk' or a 'peggy-tub' as well as 'fittle a cobble tree'. A 'rannle baulk' is a metal bar stretching from one side of the fireplace to the other, above the fire, to which a 'galley-baulk', for hanging pans on, is attached. A 'reckon' is a removable bar on which a kettle is hooked and a 'brander' is a metal tripod to support a pan. These names, like 'wintredge' - winter hedge - for a wooden clothes horse, are becoming part of history. Electricity brought redundancy to the 'peggy-tub' and the 'dolly-stick' which my 1904 account book tells me was given a new leg for 3d. And the same account book reminds us of another important change in our domestic affairs: 'Privy seat - three holer - 4s. Od.'



Saw pits were in common use by village wheelwrights and joiners until the 1940s.

Harry Baines of the Yorkshire Dialect Society recalled that "t'feller in t'pit 'd yark t'saw down an' t'feller on t'ganthry 'd yark it eop ageean, worrkin tily a chalk lahn... T'feller on top gat meoast o' t'back-raache un' t'feller in t'pit gat meenst o' t'saw-dust - seea t'misery, wor shagged oot about eeaven..."

EDWARD BOOTH'S HOLDERNESS

Edward Charles Booth wrote five novels about people and places in Holderness: *The Cliff End*, 1908, *The Doctor's Lass*, 1910, *Fondie*, 1916, *The Tree of the Garden*, 1922 and *Kith and Kin*, 1929. The first four of these were republished in the Holderness edition in 1956, shortly after Booth died at the age of 81. All have been featured in programmes on BBC Radio Humberside. *The Cliff End* and *Fondie* were serialised in 1975-6 and extracts from the others formed the series called *Edward Booth's Holderness*, broadcast in 1978.

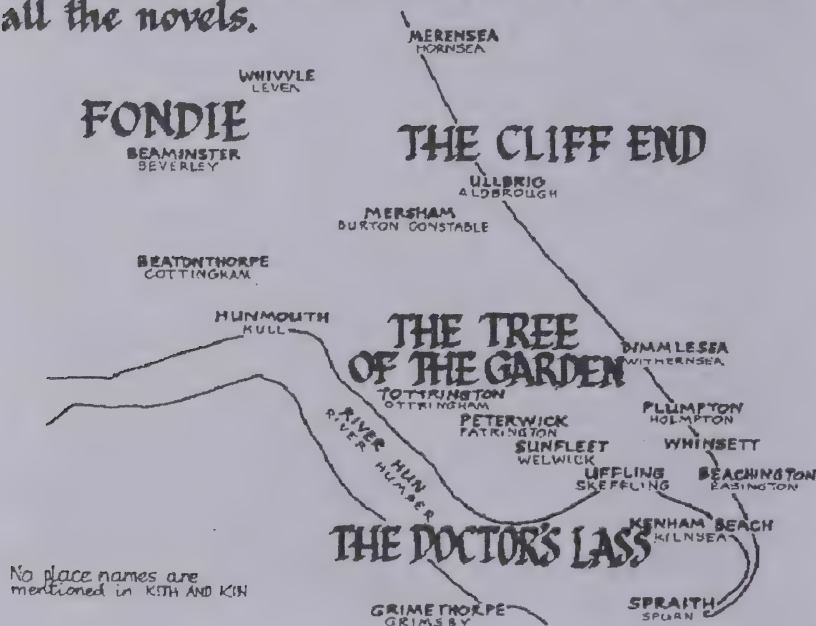
I first enjoyed Booth's novels thirty years ago and have come to know parts of them very well. His portrayal of the village scene and of the daily life and talk of the local people, in a world yet to be changed by the horrors of the First World War, is clearly the result of very careful and prolonged observation. The Holderness characters in the stories, many of whom were doubtless drawn from life, are entirely credible.

Reading about them has given me very great pleasure, even though Booth sometimes has his more sophisticated heroes and heroines behaving in a way which exasperates me. Some of the descriptive writing is,

in my opinion, masterly. No doubt all the stories can justifiably be termed sentimental, but they have a gentleness and an affectionate humour which is endearing.

Here we reproduce just three short pieces from the broadcasts and hope that you may be encouraged to read the novels.

The outline map of Holderness shows the places which provided the settings for Booth's characters, with my own idea of the real villages and towns most nearly represented in the fiction. The same names are used in all the novels.



FONDIE

Fondie is the son of Joe Bassiemoor, village wheelwright at Whivve and leader of the worship at the Primitive Methodist chapel :

The wheelwright's chapel was a hard nut to crack for all but the most seasoned and practised devout. Many a strong Whivve man would sooner have walked through the churchyard at midnight than risk coming to close quarters with the wheelwright and his kindred in this gloomy worshipping place. Moreover there is no doubt the chapel was badly situated for the general body of worshippers, who prefer something more accessible. It stood away from the road in a corner of Bless Allcot's field, with the hedge on two sides of it and nettle grown palings on the other two, to keep Bless Allcot's cattle from licking the paint off the sills, or putting their heads in at the windows during divine service, which they did once when the chapel was newly built, in Bless Allcot's father's time, and Bless Allcot's father's black bull came up to the open window when Bless Allcot's father had just got as far as "O Lord" with his eyes shut, and his face tied up in such a knot that only those who knew him well could have told where his

mouth was at the moment, or where the next word would be likely to come from, and coughed grass and spittle all down the back of his neck, like one of the Bulls of Bashan; and some say the old man jumped up crying one thing, and some say another, and some say he did and others say he didn't. And after they had driven the bull away from the second window and closed that too, Bless Allcot's father was making ready to shut his eyes again, though sideways this time, and begin all over again with "O Lord" when Fondie's father said: "Thoo's best not ti pray public of a Sunday or two, Bless Allcot, till thoo's had chance ti pray private," and Bless Allcot's father opened his eyes again and unscrewed his face as if the bull had blown down his neck a second time and told the wheelwright: "Thoo's ni occasion ti say nout, Joseph. Thoo can swear as much as omny man when thoo's i fettle — an it's not varry oft thoo isn't. Thoo'd a bin i fettle an all nobbut yon —" and he swallowed — "...yon brute ad blowed cud doon back o tha neck of a sudden." And the wheelwright said tersely: "Hod thi noise. Dost ta knaw whose house thoo's in?" Bless Allcot's father answered: "Aye. A deal better than thoo, wi yon doormat

spread ower thi stomach. An whose land diz it stand on an all? It's as mich mine as thine an a deal more. Thoo can scowl! I'se not frettened o thee an thi beard if thoo thinks I is, so thoo knaws, an thoo can keep beard ti scare crows an childern wi." Whereat those who have been told by others who were there on this occasion aver that the wheelwright gripped his beard with one hand of a sudden so that it assumed the shape of an hourglass and his voice was like a rasp when he said "Thoo dossn't say that ti me onny day but Lord's day, Bless Allcot" and Bless Allcot answered: "I'll tell it thee of a Monday or onny other day thoo wants, nobbut thoo thinks me on." But there is no record he ever did, which seems to show that he still had some spark of Christian feeling left in him. ❖ ❖ ❖



Burton Constable may have been Booth's model for Marsham Hall in his novel 'Fondie'

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From THE DOCTOR'S LASS

Hunmouth Fair has a transcendent place in our calendar. All points of time between harvest and the November Mass are calculated by their relation to it. Many a reminiscence begins with the words "Why, noo, it wad just be aboot Ummouth Fair time an all -So you may know." To dwellers in towns, grown blasé, there may be little in the sound of Hunmouth Fair to stir the pulses; but it is different with the scattered parishes that lie lonely under God's sky between Hunmouth and the sea. It is the biggest fair in England, the Elysium for all who love noise and dust and movement. The special trains, panting between Hunmouth and all the district round, pump the soil dry of its workers during the magic week. The plough lies neglected by the hedge and no ploughman's cry of 'Aave-' 'Whooa' rings melancholy under heaven. The horses group themselves inquiringly about the pasture gate holding their heads despondently over the top rail in the direction of the farmstead and ask if today can be Sunday. Men go to Hunmouth with jests on their lips who have not smiled since last Fair and careful housewives, who would not waste a currant in one of their own

teacakes, will tuck up their skirts and sit bolt upright in a carriage of eighteen passengers, just to see the fair they have never missed since they were girls in service, and bring back the same invariable Hummōuth headache, and the same brandy-snap and short temper, as a memento of the ordeal. Before the end of the Fair's first day the corpuscles of district blood are visibly enriched with its influence. Mouth-organs and new accordions, the latter smelling of glue and varnish and the former tasting horrible when blown, crop up everywhere, a veritable harvest of discordancies. Small girls wear bead necklaces and their elder sisters cheap jewellery and brooches at their bosom with Christian names stamped in silver. Children make themselves sick with mint rock and babies choke over the brandy-snap of a peculiarly inflexible and destructive character. Farm men smoke Aunt Sallie cigars that smell like the Great Plague and the Fire of London combined — All evidences of the festival that consummates itself daily in sweat and dust and that sets fierce fire to the Hummōuth sky by night. Even at Kenham Beach there are

Hunmouth drums beaten by indefatigable fingers and Hunmouth trumpets are blown by the lips of infancy below the lonely light at Spraith. ❖ ❖ ❖

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In THE TREE OF THE GARDEN Edward Booth tells of Guy Openshaw, a delicate youth who is sent for his health's sake to live for a while at Suddaby's farm at Whinsett in Holderness and of a country girl who falls in love with him. Here is part of the chapter in which we are introduced to the Suddabys :

Fingers of both hands are needed to count the members of the Suddaby household; Suddaby the elder, with Elizabeth his wedded wife, George Herbert, Dibner, the Misses Ada, Helen and Jessie and Allison Marriot the hired man, eight souls in bed and board. Mrs. Openshaw's son will make the ninth

and it might be no more than fitting to allot our tenth finger to the dog, for he is of the true family, sitting faithfully by his master's elbow at meals or lying extended on the rug before the fire at night.

Of all the household Suddaby is the animating force. Spare in build and something slightly below the normal stature, he is the very incarnation of vigilance and activity. If there is a pin on the rug he sees it. His heel is the first to thump the floor on a morning; it is he who lights the kitchen fire with the wisp of straw and kindling set out to dry in the oven corner by Lartle Jessie overnight; his the voice that snaps peremptory Christian names at the foot of the back stair in the grey dawn, as if he were breaking twigs across his knee. He is so energetic about his business and moves so quickly that at times, hurrying round the premises, he gives the effect of two men, one in pursuit of the other. He will begin a sentence at the kitchen door whose termination has to be shouted, to be audible at all, from the vicinity of the stackgarth gate. A life of unceasing labour since boyhood has not dulled his appetite for work nor taught him the blessings of repose.

He is a rare man at discourse and never works, or eats, so well as to the sound of his own voice. At table only the hottest pudding baulks him; he will clap the shank of a meat bone to his mouth, with a hand at either end, and polish his loquacious way up and down the length of it as though he were playing his souvenirs on an ocarina. And his talk is worth the hearing. The riches of Holderness are in his tongue, that wags over half a century of life in this beloved corner of the world; histories of harvests past and gone and tales of ancient worthies long since stamped into dust by the foot of time. . . . George Herbert lacks his father's speech for temporal affairs though he shows more physical strength, without adroitness, and could accommodate a parent in each compartment of his trousers. His arms, as far as the elbow, are hard and brown as table legs and bearded like the coconut. The chairs creak when he sits on them and when he lets drop his armoured boot on the floor tiles it is as if a chimney pot had fallen. His strength is fortunately subordinated to piety, the Primitive body claiming him as its own. He keeps a bible by his bedside, with an illuminated text to mark the place in it, and reads his nightly

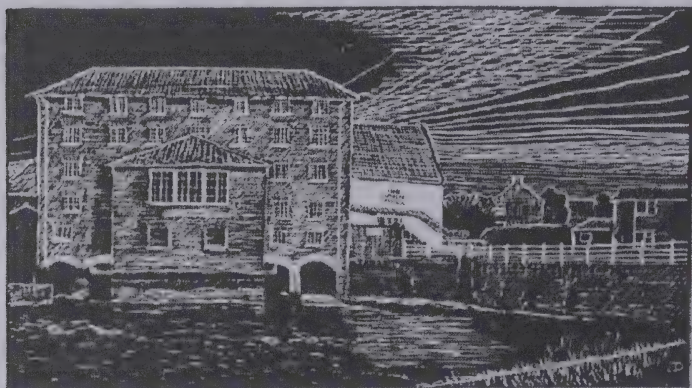
chapter by candlelight after getting into bed, an act prefaced by the rattle of his belt and trousers' buttons on the bare floor. The devotion itself has a melancholy character, like the west wind sighing down the kitchen chimney, from which, indeed, and from the snores of Dibner and Allison, it is difficult to be distinguished. Even Suddaby, whose ears analyse sounds almost as keenly as a dog's nose does scents, has been puzzled by it on occasions and constrained to ask of a sudden "What's yon?" To which his daughters retort "Why, thoo should know. It's George Herbert, o'course. Reading oot o' bible. Whoivver else should it be?" Whereat Mrs. Suddaby interposes with a quietly defensive "Niver mind! Niver mind! Let la'd be. Let him read bible if he likes. What if he diz read bible? He's a good lad as-sure!" It is rare however that the sound of George Herbert's devotion can be heard in these days for he courts the daughter of John Barmforth's hind at Hallam and goes to see her every evening across the fields, three miles each way, returning with his trousers dew-drenched to the knees, long after the others are a-bed. ❖ ❖ ❖



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In 1976 my wife and I walked the length of the River Derwent and recorded our progress in the seventeen programmes which comprised the series

LILLA CROSS TO BARMBY BARRAGE



The watermill at Stamford Bridge was in use until 1964

At Stamford Bridge we heard the history of the 1066 battle from Vic Naylor, headmaster of the village school and, on a wonderful sunny morning in October, we enjoyed the riverside walk to Low Catton and back :

Those high hawthorn hedges on the way are a haven for the birds. We had a close look at ten different kinds in ten minutes and in less than a hundred yards. They were not rare birds, though you don't usually see many tree creepers about and we were within six feet of a tree creeper for a full minute as he searched for insects round and under the thicker hawthorn branches.

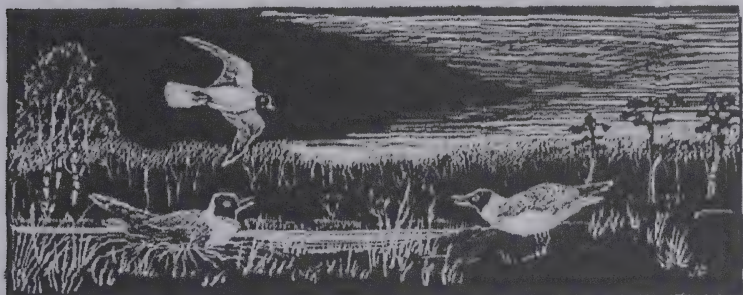
There was a missel thrush, too. Anita loves the misselthrushes: they are so apparently strong and independent and are so often the only birds to be heard singing on a windy winter's day. Stormcock is the misselthrush's other name, because his singing defies the gales. We watched tits, yellowhammers, a robin and a wren. There was a blackbird shouting, chaffinches, a magpie in the distance and a couple of moorhens investigated the undergrowth. All in the space of a few minutes and a few yards! If you walk to Low Catton you will probably have the path to yourself. There may be a lone fisherman and, if it's a summer weekend, you may see an occasional pleasure boat. Possibly traffic on the river will increase in future years but never again, I suppose, will there be, following their trades in Stamford Bridge, an importer of foreign spirits and wines, or an excise officer, or a full-time lock-keeper; all of whom were listed in a directory of 1823..... The plaque which commemorates the battle is set in a big stone beside the main road near the mill, printed in Norse and English, telling you simply 'The battle of Stamford Bridge was fought in this neighbourhood on 25th September 1066' and the sign of the Swordsman Inn, close by the bridge, is a reminder of the

legendary Norse warrior who was finally
 'brogged from below' on the battle bridge.
 The Latin words for Battle Bridge, Pons Belli,
 were one of the names given to Stamford Bridge
 in official documents for hundreds of years.
 The story of the single defender lived on in
 the village folk customs almost into the
 twentieth century. In Drake's History of York,
 written about 250 years ago; '...the people of
 this village have a custom at an annual feast
 to make pies in the form of a swill- or swine-tub,
 which tradition says was made use on by the
 man that struck the Norwegian from under
 the bridge, instead of a boat.' In The Yorkshire
 Herald in 1902; 'The incident is commemorated
 in the spear-pie feast until recently held in the
 village on 25th September when pies in the
 shape of a boat, or of a tub, were made and
 filled with pears, having a skewer sticking out
 of them to represent the spear. This spear-pie
 feast came to be called pear-pie feast.'
 Whatever the facts of the original incident on
 the bridge there is no doubt that the River
 Derwent played a very important part in
 the making of English history that day in
 September 1066. ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖



The present bridge, built in
 1727, is about 100 yards
 downstream from the
 probable site of the 1066
 bridge.

Skipwith Common is one of the beauty spots of the Derwent valley, a peaceful place where anyone can walk and be refreshed at any time of the year. Part of the common is managed as a nature reserve by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust and there is an interesting trail to follow if you wish.



Much of the area is marshy and there are large ponds which attract the mallards. Black-headed gulls make the common their nesting place and, if you walk across the heath, they will certainly announce your presence with their screaming alarm cries. The number nesting in the colony seems to vary from year to year; we have known times when it seemed that scarcely any gulls were in residence, but in other years the air above the ponds has been noisily alive with many hundreds.

Gradually the heather covered areas are being invaded by the birch and pine so that the part of the common which every year attracts the now rare night jar has to be carefully preserved. The evening call of the night jar and the chance of seeing it in flight bring birdwatchers from far and wide in late May and June. There are rare plants on the common as well as rare creatures but a plant need not be a rarity to be beautiful. The shining beauty of the silver birch bark is all around you and the shapes and colours of the Scots pines are delightful everywhere. It was on the edge of Skipwith Common, close to Skipwith church, that Robert Aske assembled his followers for that great peaceful protest march in 1536 which came to be called the Pilgrimage of Grace. They were protesting mainly against the suppression of the monasteries. Robert Aske, brother of John Aske, lord of the manor of Aughton-on-Deerwent, had 'rayased all Howdenshire and Marshelande'. He took a formidable host from Skipwith to join the men of Beverley and Hull at Market Weighton and had a good deal of success in his early negotiations with the king's representatives. Eventually, though, the king

and his advisers went back on their promises and Robert Aske, with many others, was executed. At Aughton Church you can see the inscription on the tower, rebuilt by Robert's second brother Christopher, which reads; 'Christopher, second son of Sir Robert, ought not to forget the year 1536.' For me that inscription is a memorial not only of Robert Aske but of man's constant inhumanity to man.

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You would not readily associate Skipwith Common with railways, though until 1965 the line of the Derwent Valley Railway ran along its eastern edge. In a September 1928 issue of the Leeds Mercury a correspondent reported that he "travelled on a Blackberry Special from York today. The passengers were carrying all kinds of bags, baskets and tins - and even buckets. Alighting at Skipwith, the party split into two sections. The stationmaster's wife led one party down the line while the stationmaster himself directed the others.... Six hours later, when we returned to the station, every basket, tin and bucket was full." At least eight Blackberry Special excursions were run that year, carrying about 1000 people to Wheldrake, West Cottingwith, Thorganby and Skipwith.

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Bubwith bridge was built in 1793, the year after the Selby bridge, when the turnpike trust was set up to maintain the Selby to Market Weighton road and to take tolls from the travellers who had previously used the Bubwith ferry. People travelling or sending goods from the West Riding to Hull in those days used the waterways whenever possible because the roads were circuitous and difficult. There was no road across the saltmarshes of Wallingsfen through Gilberdyke to Cave and Brough and going by Holme on Spalding Moor was hazardous even after the turnpike road was made. The tolls for Bubwith bridge were separate from the turnpike tolls and continued long after the turnpike trust came to an end in the 1870s. I myself paid my halfpenny scores of times and I well remember the toll keeper and his formidable gate. Only a heap of brick rubble now remains of the gatehouse. . . The main arch of the bridge is quite low over the water when the river is running high and I imagine it must have been difficult, in the days of the navigation, to get a 60 ft. keel through without damage. And that arch was only one of the difficulties for the keelmen. Towpaths were seldom in good order and farmers were angry when horses

trampled on crops as they left the riverside to avoid a collapsed part of the bank. Not always could the boatmen get the use of a horse for towing. They used the sails when they could, but in a narrow meandering river it was never plain sailing, and in a contrary wind with no horses there was nothing to do but wait or haul away themselves. The keelman's family was normally his crew and with one at the tiller they all took a share of the heaving on the towrope. It was slow progress but the human haulers at least had the advantage of being more sure footed than horses when it became necessary to cross the river, by way of the craft, when the tow path changed sides. Occasionally, in the early days of the Derwent navigation, it was possible for the keelman to get help from gangs of 'halers'-haulers-who preferred to rely on casual work rather than be regular 'havvies'-navigators-with full time jobs building the waterways. They were appreciated by the boatmen but often unpopular with farmers and the village people who accused them of stealing poultry and produce. There is still a Staithe Street in Bubwith but no sign of a staithe or of any other relic of the navigation, though I believe the last trading craft on the Derwent was the coal-carrying Ebenizer, of Bubwith.

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FOLK FACT AND FANCY

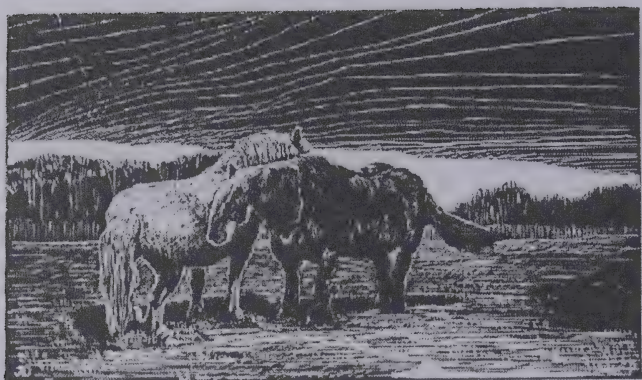
Up to the end of the last century the farming year was quite closely associated with the religious festivals. To the farmworkers the Feast of the Epiphany, 6th January, meant, in some East Yorkshire villages, the blessing of the plough and Plough Monday. On the first Monday after Epiphany many of the lads who were in farm service, 'at plōo-teal', celebrated by taking a plough round the villages. They dragged the plough along, stopping frequently to perform a traditional dance or to act out a simple drama, usually involving some rough horse-play. The lads were all fantastically dressed, the leader having a calf's tail hanging down his back - 'Captain Cautsteal'. The clown, carrying an inflated bladder on a stick, was dressed in female's clothes and was called 'Besom Bet.'



Drawing based on an old print

The people called the custom 'Fond Pleeaf,' -Fool Plough- and made it the excuse for a break from work. The lads were given a drink and parkin and they collected coppers to buy beer. Often they were fairly merry and boisterous before the end of the day, so that mothers kept their children indoors, 'oot o rooad o Fond Pleeaf.' ❖ ❖ ❖

Rogation Sunday and the three Rogation Days before Ascension Day were times when special supplications were made in church for an abundant harvest. One of the Rogation days was designated 'Rammalation Day' when, in many places, the parish bounds were beaten. This involved a procession of convivial souls from one parish landmark to another, with the vicar or a church dignitary in attendance and usually most of the village children. Each halt was marked by a ceremony of some sort, pleasant perhaps for those taking part, like an apple apiece for the youngest, or unpleasant, like being bumped a few times on the boundary stone. In our dialect to 'rammle' is to idle about and a 'rammle-rags' is a tomboy, but 'Rammalation Day' was more than an excuse for a few hours' idleness; it meant that succeeding generations knew exactly the extent of their parish. ❖ ❖



Being paid for their work only annually at Martinmas, the hired lads on the farms seldom had money in their pockets. To find an extra shilling or two during the year they collected horse hair which was in great demand and could be sold to the rag-and-bone men who came round occasionally. At times a lad might be tempted to take more hair than the horses could comfortably afford to part with, but the great majority really cared for the welfare of their horses and took great pride in their condition. Rarely would a lad 'stop ageean' for a second year on a farm where the master grudged the cost of adequate fodder. They thought nothing of stealing 'a bit o ceeak frev t'shipperd's hut' or 'a skep o ooats frev t'bin' - or from anywhere else - in order to supplement the stable rations. . . .

The lads were very keen to outshine their friends from other farms on occasions when they met with waggon and horses; at the railway stations or corn warehouses on 'liverin' deeahs', for instance. Horses were friends and, although mechanisation meant easier work, there were many of the older generation in the 1930s who lamented their disappearance from the land: "Thoo can't talk tiv a thractor," "Thoo can't give a heeam tiv a thractor." Some of the names given to working horses were used generation after generation and often the same names were coupled time and again for horses working together: Jack and Mettle, Bonny and Beaut, Diamond and Judy, Star and Brisk, Cobby and Depper, Boxer and Prince. Those were all together at Hasholme in 1920. Dialect poet Kathleen Stark missed the horses:

'Ah seed t'oss blinnders ung in t'stable theer-
 Dusty an dowly, same as summat felled -
 Nivver i use Ah's think these monny years,
 Sin tractors come an t'osses all was sold.

Yance, oot at work in t'fields in t'wind an t'sun -
 Warm wi oss sweeat, yon brokken bit champal bree-
 Noo, t'blinnders is but ketterment, worth nowt;
 Wi tractors here, there's not yah oss i seet. '

The bringing home of the corn harvest has always had a special importance in the farming year and has many customs and traditions associated with it. The 17th century poet Robert Herrick, who described a great many countryside customs, wrote about the ceremony of completing the harvest:

'Come forth my lord and see the cart
Drest up with all the country art.
See here a mawkin, there a sheet
As spotless pure as it is sweet;
The horses, mares and frisking fillies,
Clad all in linen, white as lilies;
The harvest swains and wenches bound,
For joy, to see the hock cart crowned.'

The hock cart brought in the last load. In East Yorkshire it was called the 'hockey'. 'Mawkin' means effigy and the 'mawkin' in this case was the 'mell', or 'mell-doll', made from the last sheaf of corn. It was raced for, in the field, and the winner's name figured in the doggerel chanted by the workers as they came back to the barn. There are many versions of the rhymes, adapted to suit the circumstances and personalities at the time:

"Jack Robson's gotten t'mell o Meggison corn-
It's weel boond an betther shorn
Shout Mell, lads, Mell!"
There was often some reference to the witch

or to the evil spirit commonly believed to be waiting an opportunity to prevent the completion of the harvest :

"Here we are as tite as nip -

We niyver flung ower bud yance iv a grip -

And then oot Jack gav her the slip -

Hip-Hip-Hooray."

'Tite' is an Icelandic word for soon or prompt.

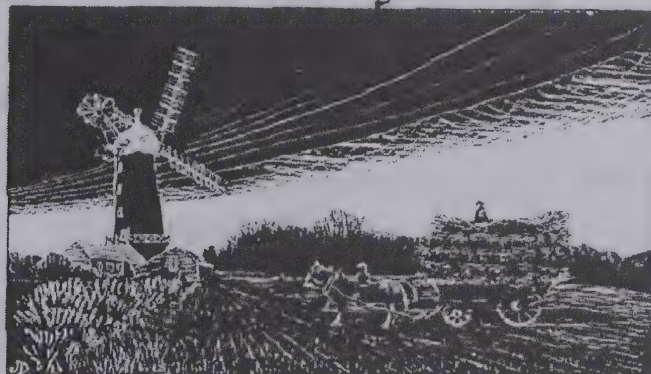
"We've rovven wer shets an torn wer skin

Ti git this merry arvest in.

Arvest in an arvest oot -

We've bet all t'farmers roond aboot."

Fire figured largely in attempts to banish the evil spirits and on the last day of the harvest in East Yorkshire we 'bont t'awd witch' by having a bonfire on the stubble and plenty to eat and drink. And no doubt a few more 'shets' were 'rovven' and a few more skins were torn before the witch was effectively disposed of for another year. ❖ ❖ ❖



Amongst the East Yorkshire verse selected for A 'PLAIN MAN'S POETRY, which was a personal choice of poems in both dialect and plain English, were Elsie Grasby's 'Scarecrow', previously unpublished, and part of George Lancaster's 'Riding of the Stang'.

Elsie Grasby lived and worked in Hull most of her life though she came originally from the Wolds at Leavening where her father was the village schoolmaster. Sadly she died, quite young, in 1954. She loved the countryside and went out from the city each spring especially to find and to enjoy looking at the cowslips. She loved the East Yorkshire dialect, too, and used it to write about what she saw in the fields and farms :

'Noo, leeak, wheeas putten thoo i t'field ?
Soom greeat daft eead, Ah laay
'At thinks soom sticks, a billy cock,
An awd coot an a lass's frock
'U freeten t'bods awaay.

Thoo'll flaay neea creeaks, nor nout else mich;
They'll nivver seea thoo's theer —
An if thi awd coot flaps in t'winnd
Whaivver set tha up 'U finnd
'At nut a bod'll care.

Wha - leeak - they're feeadin roond tha, noo,
An, bon it all ! 'Ah'm blest ! —

A sparrer's set on t'billy cock,
A gippy's rahwin coals in t'frack
An t'coat pocket ods a nest!'

A scarecrow was called a 'flaycreek' or a
'mawkin'. A different kind of 'mawkin' is
written about in Lancaster's long poem about
stang riding, part of which, in an amusing
jingle, describes the village characters who were
planning a riding of the stang to shame some
miscreant who had ill-treated his wife:

' There was Billy Magee
Wiv a kest iv is ee
An a roos pinned at front of is best seckaree,
An young Jabad Rees
Skymin oot of is ees,
An young Randy Todd
At wore iv is billy the wing of a bod,
An speelywag Robby
The son of the bobby,
An bandy-legged Dick
Wheas feyther wor deead, bud is mother wor wick,
An Ellery Crisp
That ad teed up is slops wi a lang wots sthraw wisp,
An Gorveny Mile
Wiv a at on is eead leek a wemmeled doon sile,
An young Bucky Sykes
That wor suckin awaay at a pipe iv is wikes,

An awd Cocky Sharrah
 Wiv a pair of octoavers as big as a barrer,
 An lots on em mooar —
 There wadn't be yan on em less nor two scoopar.
 Seeah wi sang an wi sup
 Doon at t'Bull an Blue Monkey they meead it all up.
 An efther soom caffle, contrahvin an talkin
 They varry seean manidged ti mak up a mawkin.
 Then they borrowed a stee
 Fra Billy Magee

An set beeah t'mawkin an Billy astrahd,
 Cos is voice was sa rough an is mooth was sa wahd-
 O Lord t'was a whopper,
 Leek top of a hopper —
 An they knew he could let oot the poethry proper...?

That was written more than a hundred years ago when the custom of riding the stang had not quite disappeared from Humberside villages. In some ways George Lancaster's jingle is a useful social document. The stang was ridden in a village if it was thought that someone ought to be punished or humiliated for wife-beating — or it could be for husband-beating. Originally the custom required that the offender himself be ridden on a pole — the stang — resting on the shoulders of some of the village strong men, who stopped at various points while their spokesman detailed the offender's misdeeds, in rhyme :

"Here we come wi a ran a dan dan —
 It's neither for my cause nor thy cause
 That I ride this stang
 But for Sammy the butcher —
 His wife he did bang-----" and so on.



Drawing from an old print

In between the recitations everyone made as much noise as possible, to bring all the people out of doors, banging drums and cans, blowing horns and whistles, bawling and shouting. Latterly, instead of the offender himself, an effigy was carried - a mawkin - and the stang was a ladder - a stee - instead of just a pole. On the third night of the stang-riding the mawkin was burned, with a lot of noise and merriment and beer drinking. Each night of the three the procession went three times round the church before parading through the village. That was

supposed to give some sort of status or authority to the proceedings : "Neeabody can't deea nowt tiv us - we've been three times round t'choch." Sometimes, inevitably, there was little justice in the affair; often it became merely an excuse for rampaging and drinking.

".... Noo all you good people who live i this raio
We'd ev you tak nooatice, for this is oor law :
If onny of you usbands your good wives do bang
We'll get on a stee and we'll ride you a stang."
As seen as e'd finished they set up a cheer
An Jabod collected some coppers for beer.
They kep on a-cheerin an shoutin an talkin
As they went round the village an followed the maarkin.

An Billy Magee,

As was set uppa t'stee,
He reeled oot the rhymes
An Ah'll sweear at he reeled em oot full fifty times
Three neets did they od

This blissed norrayshun an then, on the thod,
They'd a bonfire an beer, an sike capers an games -
An they ung Sammy Spadger, is mawkin, in flames
Wi crackers all teed tiv is legs an is arms.

An siken a spree

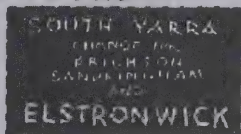
You nivver did see

An varry few fooak gat ti bed awhile three.
It was the biggest norrayshun at ivver was seen
When they bont Sammy Spadger on Cottingham Green?



THROUGH YORKSHIRE EYES was a series of observation and comment made on a five-month journey across Australia and New Zealand. I was intrigued by the place names. Musical aboriginal names for features and places, like Cooloolobin or Currinundi, Mullumbimbi or Melawandi alternated with long established British standbys like Beverley, Cheltenham or York. Euphonious names like Kambalda and Kalgoorlie, or pleasant English imports such as Southern Cross or Margaret River, are mixed up on the map with monstrosities like Tin Can Bay, Bald Knob and Charlie's Shoot. The names of the main streets of the bigger cities seem to have demanded no sort of imaginative effort from anyone. The square mile of Adelaide City is bounded by North Terrace, South Terrace, East and West Terrace. Melbourne has, in succession, King Street, William Street, Queen Street, Elizabeth Street and there is a similar pattern in Brisbane.

On a railway station not far from Melbourne city centre is a sign to delight any traveller from North Humberside:



I wonder which homesick son of Holderness was originally responsible for that. ❖ ❖

MAH WOD !

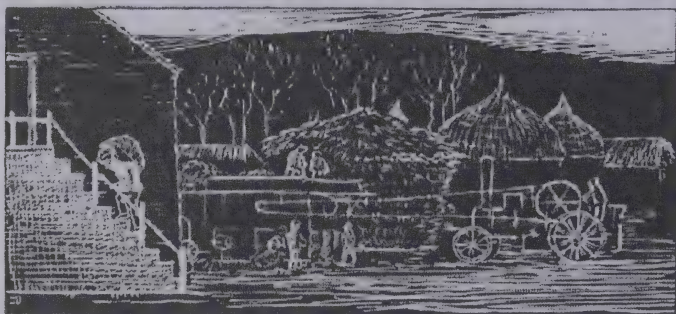
This series of six programmes was described as a light-hearted commentary on the disappearance of a number of dialect words from our vocabulary north of the Humber.

A hundred years ago brambles were 'brummels' or 'bummelkites' and certainly not blackberries. If our great-grandparents spoke of blackberries they meant the berries we know as blackcurrants. The word berries on its own was used for gooseberries. George Wilson grew magnificent blackcurrants in his garden and took prizes at all the local shows. It was the ambition of all the gardeners to beat George Wilson but it was a show committee which finally defeated him. He had wonderful currants, as usual, and it seemed that no-one else had a chance, but when the judges had finished in the tent there were George's currants looking very dignified on their soup-plate, but lonely, without a card. George saw the secretary: "What's mah blackcurrants deean at tha, then?" "Thoo wants ti reead thi schedule, George!" "What's tha meean - reead mi schedule?" "Well - reead it - what dis it saay?" "It says - a plaate o' blackcurrants -" "Aye - it diz - a plaate - an thoo's putten

em on a dish — we disqualified tha !”
We were not always so particular about the words we used. Some of the old names we had for plants and flowers seem ambiguous and confusing ; an ordinary scarlet poppy was once called a ‘cock-rose’; laburnum was ‘libollom’ and a cowslip was a ‘cowstripling.’ Daisies were ‘bessybainwurts’ and the name for a marigold was ‘gowlan’, much less pleasing to the ear than marigold. Some of the local names were an improvement ; we called the fungus on dead trees ‘fairybooter’ and the seeds of the ash tree were ‘kitty-kegs’!

Now that we are ‘going metric’ there is a long list of words from our imperial measures tables which will soon join the archives ; pounds and pints will follow the pecks and perches into history. I shan’t be sorry ; the mysteries of bushels, bags and quarters were a great problem — I could never remember that a bushel of wheat weighed $4\frac{1}{2}$ stones and a bushel of oats only 3, but then it was never my job to carry 18 stone bags of wheat on threshing day. The men who carried the bags on their backs do not forget : “Twelve ston tiv a bag o wats, sixteen ston tiv a bag o barley, eighteen ston a bag o wheeat — Tahme thoo’d ugged wheeat up t’granary

steps all daay thoo knew aboot weights and measures afoor neet."



They didn't carry corn, they ugged it. A newly appointed commercial traveller for a seed merchant was going the rounds of the Wolds farms on his bicycle, carrying an awkward case of books and samples. "Can you tell me the best way to Huggate?" he shouted to the waggoner as he left a farmyard near Wetwang, "— the best way to Huggate?" "Od on a minute," replied the waggoner, "Ah'll find tha a bit o' band."

Some measurement terms, once familiar, had disappeared long before we thought of 'going metric'. Perhaps you know all about acres — and rods, poles or perches too — but did you ever hear of a 'thondil'? Plots of land for ploughing on unenclosed commons were of three sizes: 'broad's', 'narrow's', and, in between, 'thondils'. A thondil was about

three roods (in case you've forgotten, a rood was a quarter of an acre). It seems to have been a flexible sort of measurement, like broads and narrows and like 'yat-steed', the space for a gate, or 'room-steed', the space between posts in a fence or supports in a building. In yards, feet and inches that could vary quite a lot. A 'stack-steed' was the space necessary to put up a stack in the staggarth but the actual size varied; a 'coopin' needed more room than a 'pike'.

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"Thoo's fond! - thoo adn't neea call ti tak up wi sike a flappy-sket as yon!" So a young man might have been reproved by his mother when he got home after taking a girl out for the first time. Did it make sense to you? 'Fond' is foolish. "You had no need to take up with such a flighty girl as she is" - 'sike a flappy-sket as yon.' About a hundred years ago, remember, the girls had ample skirts to flap. 'Flappy-sket' is an apt word for a flighty female but it has disappeared, forgotten, like 'flibbiskee' - fly-by-sky - another word for a similar character. 'Tak up wi'. 'Tak', for take, was a useful word and, of course, still is a useful word.

'Deeant tak on seea' - Don't make such a fuss. 'Tak od' - take hold (or it might be 'click od') - not just to grasp something with the hands but to embark on some enterprise - "Fraame thisen an tak odden t'job proper."

'Tak in' - deceive. 'Tak up' - improve, - of the weather. "If t'wind gits oot o t'eeast it'll tak up."

'Tak off' - nothing to do with aeroplanes - mimic, ridicule. And 'tak' on its own, in quite a different sense. A countryman was paid for his work usually by the hour or the day and sometimes by the task. If he was 'gappin tonnups' for instance, he might earn so much for the day - 'bi tahme' - or so much for each row or each acre - 'bi tak'.

'Set' is a word of a great many meanings which, it seems to me, was often used in a different way fifty years ago. Obviously it is still in common use but how often nowadays in the sense of accompany?

"Ah'll set tha awf waay ooam."

I remember as a boy setting my friend 'awf waay ooam'. He lived two miles away along a lonely lane. Halfway was a little wood and we were both scared

of the place - a 'flaysome spot' - so I set him or he set me to a point at the middle of the wood, then we separated and ran like the wind. Perhaps you remember getting a reminder to wash your hands before dinner because they were 'set-in' with grime. You would need a 'ladlin can' of hot water from the 'set-pot' by the fire. If you were late for your meal possibly the food would be 'set-on', 'setten-on'; stuck to the bottom of the pan, 'pot-setten'.

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Did you ever hear a corncrake calling? Up to about 1930 they were not uncommon in Humberside but it is now many years since I heard that rasping 'crake'. Corncrake is a very apt name and so is its scientific name, 'crex-crex', but with East Yorkshire awkwardness we chose to call it by a different name 'meadow drake' - a word that has now vanished from our vocabulary, as have so many more of the old names for creatures; 'moor-tiltin' for meadow-pipit, for example, or 'porriwiggle' for a tadpole. I prefer 'porriwiggle'. How long is it since you heard anyone call a cuckoo a 'gowk'? Cuckoo, like corncrake, is a very suitable onomatopoeic

name, but we called the cuckoo a 'gowk' for almost a thousand years. We got that word from the Vikings, with a great many more, and just occasionally it is still used, as in Robert Horspool's dialect poem about summertime :

'Ower t'segs an shallows an wheer pools
lig deeap
Kingfisher bliew's a-flashin tiv an fraw.
Creeaks fliggin yam wheal roond in
t'evenin air.

Frae tree an field an sky aboon bods sing;
A silly gowk beals oot 'is fond 'cuckoo?'

A crow is not often called a 'creeak' nowadays. Other bird names that are disappearing are 'ullot' for owl and 'bullspink' for chaffinch (not, as one might have expected, for bullfinch).

A goldfinch was once a 'proudtailier', a name now quite obsolete, or a 'red cap'. We still hear 'screamer' for swift but 'blackbeetawaah' and 'flittermouse', old names for the bat, have been forgotten along with 'bessy ducker'. 'Bessy ducker' is a dipper, called a water-ouzel in some of the old bird books.

Have you ever heard the word 'hazzled'—or, more likely, without the h, 'azzled'—applied to cattle? It meant roan —

'dark-azzled' if red predominated, 'leet-azzled' if white predominated. Hazzled has given way to roan or roaned. Pled is in the standard dictionary but one of Yorkshire's old words for two-coloured, -'spenged' - for red and white, has gone out of use. You will not find 'rig-welted' or 'ower-welted' in an ordinary dictionary but they are still fairly familiar. A sheep on its back, unable to regain its feet, is said to be 'rig-welted'. Still familiar too are the names for sheep used in East Yorkshire for many hundreds of years: 'hog' or 'hogget' for the young sheep between weaning and first shearing, 'gimmer-hog' for the female - 'wether-hog' for the male.

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Grandfather used to say "I'll be parzellin down to t'lane end". He walked only slowly so he set off before us and 'parzelléd' - or 'he'santered' - sauntered. "I'll be santerin on." Anyone who moved with a quick lively step was 'nimmin'; "She wor fair nimmin along." Many of the old words for movement seem to have been forgotten over the last sixty years or so. We no longer describe people coming 'hurriedly from some confined space, like school or chapel, as 'comin oot all of a fullock' nor is a clambering youngster called a 'rammacks'.

any more. Nor is loitering now described as 'slammacking' and we do not use 'ploading' for walking with difficulty over heavy land. Ploading has an appropriate sound; you can almost hear your boots being dragged from the sticky clay. If you 'paddled' in East Yorkshire a hundred years ago the chances are that you were not on the beach but that you were having a problem walking at all;

"E's leeam - e can nobbut paddle". Uncertain on your feet you would be 'wankle' or 'wemmly' or, sarcastically, 'aboot as lingey as a steean pig trough'. 'Lingey' was for agile or nimble.

If you were moving in a stealthy way, trying not to be noticed, you would be 'gannin' whimsly' or 'sliyin'; "Ah slove yam, feealin a reglar gommeril" - "I went shamefacedly home, feeling very foolish."

Home is a word that probably will never disappear, though the old North Humberside pronunciations of it may. We never had much use for the h and we broaden the vowel so home becomes 'ooam'. But the word is also readily understood as 'yam' and even as 'eeam'. The differences, it seems, are not regional so you choose which seems to fit. "Ah's awaay eeam", "Ah's off ooam", "Ah's bun yam" - "I'm homeward bound."

Home is where you make it. About ten years ago a lady from London, who made her home in Hornsea, wrote this for me :

'Nigh on thotty year agooa, when Ah coom
ti this pléeace,

Ah thout Ah'd gotten ti furrin parts
amang a different reeace ;

"Coom lass - coom, shaape thisen, deean't
stand gawpin theer !"

"Mash mi tea" and "Leeaks tha !" and
sikelike Ah wad cear.

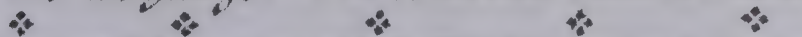
Ee - sae moithered did Ah feal - Ah thout
"Ah'll nivver staay"

Bud then Ah fun Ah'd taen root and
couldn't flit awaay.

Noo Ah can understand all t'speech and
deean't feal sike a loon,

Although Ah'll nivver speak t'tongue
reet - for Ah coom frae Lunnon' toon.'

There was an' off-coomed-un' who learned
the language ! 'Sha fraamed middlin an all !'



IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING

In this series of eight programmes I spoke about some of the dialect poets of East Yorkshire, whose verse has been published by the Yorkshire Dialect Society, and read examples of their work.

Ruth Hedger lived for some years at Birdsall, where her father was vicar, and many of her dialect stories are about Wolds people. She also knew the North Riding very well and was familiar with the dialect of Cleveland. She wrote all her life and went on telling us her dialect tales even when she was seriously ill in hospital shortly before she died in 1976. Here is her poem called 'London Piece' from the Cleveland Anthology:

'Ah niver thout it ud cum ti pass —
Oor Jackie's wedded a city lass!
Wi pooder an paint sha clarts er phiz,
An sha talks like fawks on t'Wyerless diz:
Fower year e wer coortin Robison' niece,
Bud e's bin an getten a London piece.

Sha walks up t'village on eels that igh,
All t'lahtle lads mocks er mincin by;
Er sket's that stright sha cud niver frame
Ti clim over t'stahl; why, yer'd think er lame,

Till sha clicks up er petticoats bowld as brass-
Yon shameless piece of a London lass!

Annie Robison's omely; aye
Bud er uncle's gotten a bit put by;
Sha's a cose-pröod lass, is Robison's Annie-
Sha's quiet an menseful, kahnd an canny;
An sha'll get is brass when e dees, will t'niece;
Jack's gotten nout wiv is London piece.

Sha can't beeak breed an sha weean't scrub t'floo;
Nor yet wesh t'step on er awn front door;
'is Dad wer allus a careful man,
Bud sha's made Jack buy on t'instalment plan;
'E'll rew!" says t'meeaster, "Bud t'fond young ass
Mun fick it oot wiv is London lass."

What is your name for an earwig? Probably
just earwig. There are a number of names
for it in the dialects of Yorkshire; 'forkin-
robber' or 'forkin-robin' or 'forky-robber' in
the East Riding, 'twig' and 'battle-twig'
'twitchbell' in the North Riding. Twitchbells
were the only creatures to scare Ruth Hedger:

'It taks a bit ti mak me shrike -
Nut wrezzils, rattons, mice an sike -
Ah'll bray all t'lot wi t'peggy-stick;
Bud twitchbells - nay, they're over wick!

On threshin days Ah'll tak a whack
 At rats wi onny lad on t'stack,
 An when t'dogs miss, Ah'll woe-betahde em;
 Bud twitchbells, nay, Ah can't abahde em.

Blackclocks in t'kitchen late at neet
 Ah cranch an flatten wi mi feet;
 Bud nasty twitchbells maks ma sick -
 Ah'm tellin tha, they're desperd wick.

When stood at t'sink ti wesh misen,
 Ah shaks mi flannin oot, an then
 A twitchbell tummles oot on't - nay,
 Thoo'd ear ma skrike tweea mile away.

Spahders can spin afoor mi eyes,
 They bring us luck, play war wi t'flies;
 Ah decan't deea nouw ti stop their fun,
 It's nobbut twitchbells maks ma run.'



The Yorkshire Dialect Society was founded in 1897 and has a worldwide membership. Membership currently costs £10 a year (£13 for members outside Europe). Applications for membership may be sent to:

*The Honorary Treasurer
 9 Northlands Avenue
 Earswick
 York YO32 9FS*



Members are invited to four meetings each year and receive the Society's annual Transactions and Summer Bulletin which contain articles and new dialect writing. The Society publishes more than 20 dialect books, cassettes and CDs and a price list may be obtained from:

*The Honorary Librarian
 Spring Hill
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YORK



The Shambles

Sydney Martin lives in York but he has his roots in the farm land of East Yorkshire, as his forbears were Kilham people. His father was once a waggoner at Southburn and his mother was in farm service on the Wolds from the age of 12. But, as happened with so many low-paid country workers in the later years of the nineteenth century, Sydney's parents turned from the farms to the railways to improve their standard of living. Sydney himself has worked almost all his life on the railway. As a passenger train guard he found himself in every corner of Yorkshire, practising all the dialects from Hornsea to Halifax and from Mexborough to Middlesbrough as well as those of Lancashire and Durham. His topical dialect writings appear regularly in the *Bulletins* and *Transactions* of the Yorkshire Dialect Society and, to reprint here, I have chosen his poem

'A Simple Soort' from the East Yorkshire Anthology:

'Ah's nobbud a simple soort o lad,
Nowt flash i t'way o brains,
Ah can ploo a field an mak a stack
An dig a hooal for t'drains,
An when it comes ti mowin —
Ah tak's that i mi stride,
Ah can sow, hoe, set a rig,
An milk a coo beside.

Sometimes Ah gans ti visit t'toon
Bud Ah's nocan ower struck somehoo,
Fo t'money Ah've arned is ower seean spent
An Ah brings back nowt ti show.
For me — Ah'd seeaner stop at ceam
Ti git sum mair wark done,
Or 'gan roon t'farm ti leek at t'erops
Wi t'awd dog Shepp, an t'gun.

So if thoo sees me warkin
An Ah deean't hev mich ti say,
Ah's still as appy i mi wark —
Just plooin or makkin hay.
There's things Ah knaws is sartain
An ti me they're varry dear,
Like seed-time, growth an harvest —
Ti leek forrard ti each year.



GRAVE SENTIMENTS

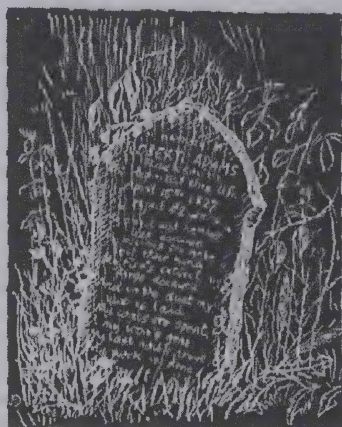
For these programmes we sought old memorials and epitaphs all over East Yorkshire. You may think it a rather morbid occupation, going round churchyards looking at gravestones, peering up at churchwall tablets, studying inscriptions, but it isn't really. I like to think that if the people who are commemorated in all the memorials and epitaphs could see for themselves that someone is taking an interest in them, however belated, they would be quite pleased. Not morbid – often it is fascinating, more often revealing and interesting than distressing. One has to remember not to take at its face value, without question, the content of the more fulsome epitaphs. The American journalist who wrote that "the tombstone is about the only thing that can stand upright and lie on its face at the same time" was making a fair comment. So we look at all these post-mortem records with, we hope, a discerning eye. ❖ ❖

At Leven the parish church was rebuilt on its present site during the 19th century. Previously the church was at Hallgarth, about a mile away, where many of the headstones in the old graveyard remain, half hidden in the undergrowth, many partly covered in ivy, many with inscriptions almost eroded away,



Sycamore saplings thrust upward from thick undergrowth where once the farm horses stamped impatiently as they waited to be shod. The smithy was once a busy place but it is now many years since the sound of hammer on anvil was heard ringing round the graveyard :

'My anvil and hammer
lies declined,
My bellows too have
lost their wind,
My fire's extinct, my
forge decayed,
And in the dust my
vice is laid,
My coals are spent,
my iron's gone.
My 'last nail's drove,
'my work is done.'



The headstone for Robert Adams, blacksmith,

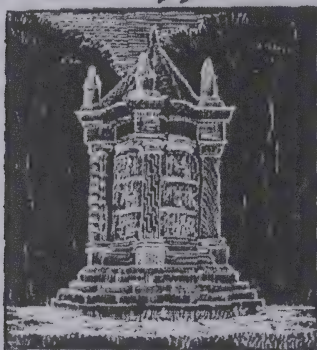
is just a few yards from the 'forge decayed' where he spent much of his working life. Robert Adams was 80 years old when the advent of the 'Locomotion' on the Stockton and Darlington Railway signalled the beginning of the end for the working horses. I wonder if Robert read about 'Locomotion'; I wonder if he was able to read at all. In any case I feel sure he was a good blacksmith until he died in 1827 when 'his coals were spent, his iron gone, his last nail was drove and his work was done.' A splendid commemorative metaphor!

One of East Yorkshire's most fascinating memorials is at Sledmere - the Waggoners' Monument. The inscription around the top reads 'Sir Mark Sykes designed this monument in remembrance of the gallant service rendered in the Great War by the Waggoners' Reserve, a corps of 1000 drivers raised by him on the Yorkshire Wolds farms in 1912.' On one side - the words carved in stone in a strangely alien style, (alien, that is, to the language, which makes a gesture now and then towards the local dialect) - are verses which set out the Waggoners' story:

'These steecans a noble tale do tell
Of what men did when war befell,
For in that Fourteen harvest tide
The call for men went far and wide,
To help to free the world from wrong
To shield the weak and bind the strong.'

There are four more stanzas but the 'noble tale these steecans do tell' is much more dramatically set out in the carvings around the rest of the monument. They are in a bold Saxon style which is very effective and very evocative. The waggoners are shown at work on the farms, then joining the Reserve and collecting the precious £1 for enlisting — known as Sir Mark's sovereign, too tempting to be missed by the hired lads most of whom were earning less than £20 for a whole year's work — then being called up from the harvest fields in 1914, going overseas and fighting. There are fearsome figures of the Germans burning, killing and running away, so ferocious that in 1938 a party of German tourists who visited Sledmere protested and sent photographs to German newspapers. There were cries of 'English horror propaganda' and a demand from Hitler's government that the monument be removed. But, of course, it has remained. . . . In Sledmere church, across the road from the

Waggoners' memorial, amongst marvellous old beech trees, there is a commemorative tablet to Edmund Thomas Sandars, lawyer friend of Sir Mark Sykes. He was an artist as well as a barrister and the tablet records that 'he knew and loved the people of the Wolds and Holderness for whom, reviving the arts of the ancient illuminators, he devoted the two years following the world war, in which he served from 1914 to 1918, to the making of a manuscript book commemorating all those from these parts who served in the Green Howards or the Waggoners' Reserve'. That manuscript book is also in Sledmere church, protected in a display case, open, when I last saw it, at the page describing the driving skills of the farm servants, with a fine illustration of three heavy horses pulling a Wolds waggon. So the waggoners are worthily remembered.



Waggoners'
Monument,
Sledmere



Detail

GLOSSARY of dialect words not explained in the text

band-makkin	making twists of straw with which to bind sheaves of corn
blinnders	horse's head harness
bod-tentin	scaring crows
caffle	argument
coopin	gable-ended rectangular stack
dolly-stick	wooden appliance used in washing clothes
fick	struggle
govveny	probably from 'gauvin' - staring and gawpe-andrew - a staring simpleton
ligh	scythe
liverin deeahs	delivery days
menseful	sensible, decent
norrayshun	commotion
octoavers	? boots (I have not seen this word except in George Lancaster's poem, <i>id.</i>)
off-ender	odd horse of three working together, two being in double harness
peggy-tub	container for clothes being washed
rahrvin, rovven	ripping, ripped
reaster	one of a team of working horses making less effort than the other(s)
seekaree	smock-frock
set a rig	set up markers for ploughmen
shrike, skrike	shriek
sike, siken	such-
sile	strainer
skymin	looking furtively sideways
slops	trousers
speelywag	probably from 'speelie wally' - a slender sickly-looking person
stee	ladder
strickle	whetstone
tatie-scratters	potato pickers
teeah, tother	the one and the other
wemmled	wobbled, tumbled
wick	alive, lively
wikes	corners of the mouth
wats, wots	oats
wrezzil	weasel

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